



Fall Technical Workshop Report

*September 14-15, 2006
New York City*

THE NIEHS WETP AFTER NEARLY 20 YEARS AND TWO MAJOR DISASTER RESPONSES

Report following the September 14-15, 2006 NIEHS WETP Fall Technical Workshop
Disaster Response Training: From WTC to Katrina — Five Years of Lessons Learned

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EVOLUTION OF THE NIEHS WETP PROGRAM FROM 9/11 TO HURRICANE KATRINA

The mission of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Worker Education and Training Program (NIEHS WETP) is to provide high quality safety and health training and resources for workers handling hazardous materials or involved in responding to emergencies involving hazardous materials. NIEHS WETP achieves this, in part, by making awards to a national network of nonprofit safety and health training programs.

The NIEHS WETP has the same mission and function as it did when it began in 1987. The program still exists to provide high quality safety and health training and resources to workers handling hazardous waste and responding to emergencies involving hazardous materials. While the scenarios that result in the hazardous materials or the response may have changed, what the program teaches workers to do – environmental remediation and emergency response - has not changed.

Some things have changed since 1987 and the inception of the program. The program was conceived to provide workers who were cleaning up Superfund sites and performing RCRA removal actions and the like. Now the program finds itself responding to terrorist attacks, natural disasters and meth labs. But the work requires that workers have the same knowledge base in order to protect themselves and the communities in which they are working. And arguably, that knowledge base is HAZWOPER and HAZWOPER related training.

Within NIEHS WETP and amongst awardees, there has been a tug between disaster response and the core HAZWOPER training mission and what the program's focus should be. Some have argued that the program is simply evolving and that we now use the core HAZWOPER to promote preparedness for emergencies.

The NIEHS WETP is also now part of the National Response Plan. This has required NIEHS WETP to develop the mechanism to deal with emergency response in terms of its ability to activate awardees to participate in a response. This mechanism is the ESAP.



LESSONS FROM THE PAST FIVE YEARS

In-depth participation by the NIEHS WETP in the World Trade Center (WTC) response and the subsequent NIEHS WETP national lessons learned technical workshop held in Nashville, Tennessee in April 2002, provided the basis for the NIEHS WETP to develop a national response preparedness plan, called the Emergency Support Activation Plan (ESAP). The ESAP facilitates more effective NIEHS WETP responses in future national incidents.

Because of this, many of the NIEHS WETP national awardees were active participants in the response to the World Trade Center disaster providing personal protective equipment, instructional staff, industrial hygiene support, and developing and delivering the WTC Site Orientation training program. However, the implementation of safety and health training and practice often ran into barriers. To learn from these lessons, the NIEHS WETP hosted a national technical workshop in the spring of 2002 in Nashville, Tennessee. Using the findings reported from that workshop, the NIEHS WETP developed and implemented an Emergency Support Activation Plan (ESAP) to improve its future emergency responses under the National Response Plan (NRP) developed by the Department of Homeland Security.

As the ESAP was developed, NIEHS WETP coordinated with OSHA, so that the ESAP now serves as the NIEHS WETP Worker Safety and Health Training Support Annex to the National Response Plan (NRP) Worker Safety and Health Annex.

In addition, a new grants training program area - the HAZMAT Disaster Preparedness Training Program (HDPTP) - was established and funded. To date, more than 6,300 awardee instructors and workers have been trained in the OSHA/NIEHS WETP Disaster Site Worker Courses (OSHA 5600 and 7600). These courses train disaster site workers and instructors who provide skilled support services, (e.g. utility, demolition, debris removal, or heavy equipment operation) or site clean up services in response to natural and man-made disasters. In addition, the NIEHS WETP Minimum Health and Safety Training Criteria, a quality control guidance document for the NIEHS WETP training grants program and a model for all training providers, was revised to include such all-hazards training.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast NIEHS WETP was ready immediately implementing its ESAP and later, when the NRP was activated in response to Hurricane Katrina NIEHS WETP began working through the NRP Worker Safety and Health Annex as coordinated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

As with the response to the World Trade Center attacks, there were lessons to be learned from the Katrina response. The NIEHS WETP hosted another national technical workshop in the spring of 2006 in Birmingham, Alabama, which examined the first six months of the NIEHS WETP Katrina response as seen through the eyes of the NIEHS WETP, NIEHS WETP grantees, and several federal partners. A consensus emerged that while valuable in its current form, the NIEHS WETP response still needs improvement. Moreover, the response to the Hurricane showed that the barriers evidenced in the WTC response with regard to providing effective safety and health training to responders, still exist under the “new” National Response Plan.

In the fall of 2006, reflecting on the five year anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks and the one year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, the NIEHS WETP hosted a national technical workshop to reflect on the Program’s activities in response to each of these disasters and to begin to look forward to explore what the Program’s next steps should be. The theme of the workshop was Disaster Response Training: From WTC to Katrina Five Years of Lessons Learned.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP

The Fall 2006 Technical Workshop was held on Thursday, September 14th and Friday, September 15th, 2006 in New York City. The theme of this year's workshop was Disaster Response Training: From WTC to Katrina Five Years of Lessons Learned. The workshop was comprised of two major platforms for information exchange: panel discussions and breakout sessions. This year's Technical Workshop featured four panel discussions and offered participants the option to attend one of four breakout sessions facilitated at the conclusion of the four panel discussions.

Keynote Speaker: John Howard, NIOSH

Dr. John Howard's overall theme was that workers should not get sick from their response activities. He discussed the needs of workers who were at the WTC site and impressed that we must look at how we can better make administrative controls work at disaster sites and that safety must be managed at the highest levels.

Keynote Speaker: David Neun, IAFF

Mr. Neun provided an overview of national response issues related to training. He noted that emergency response is similar regardless of the size of the disaster and talked about the basic elements needed in a response. Mr. Neun noted the importance of the OSHA Disaster Site Worker course as a prerequisite to a worker being involved in a response and the need for responders to know the chain of command at a disaster site.

The topics for this year's panel discussions were as follows:

Panel 1: World Trade Center Health Surveillance

Moderator: Claudia Thompson, PhD, NIEHS

John Howard, MD, NIOSH

Robin Herbert, MD, Mt. Sinai Surveillance Program

Alison Geyh, PhD, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

David Prezant, MD, New York City Fire Department

This panel discussion focused on the various medical issues plaguing 9/11 responders and cleanup workers due to toxic substance exposure released from the destruction of the world trade center towers and damage to the surrounding infrastructure. The panel discussion also highlighted programs implemented to address the medical and surveillance needs of these populations

Panel 2: Lessons Learned from 9/11 Responders and Trainers

Moderator: Bruce Lippy, PhD, CIH, CSP, The Lippy Group

Dave Newman, IH, New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health

Pete Gorman, Uniformed Fire Officers Association

Don Ellenberger, Center to Protect Workers' Rights

Mike Cackowski, Laborers Local 472

Bruce Murphy, International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 15

Panel 2 provided the opportunity for emergency responders and worker health and safety trainers to share with workshop attendees lessons learned from their own experience in 9/11 emergency response and cleanup efforts.

Panel 3: Post 9/11 and Katrina Changes in Response

Moderator: Joseph "Chip" Hughes, NIEHS

Laura Hartline Weems, CIH, U.S. Coast Guard

Amir Rasheed, New York Police Department

Panel 3 provided the opportunity for the U.S. Coast Guard and the New York Police Department to discuss what lessons their organizations learned from 9/11 and/or Hurricane Katrina and the changes they have put in place as a result of their experiences.

Panel 4: Contractor and Subcontractor Safety and Health Relationships

Moderator: Donald Elisburg, National Clearinghouse

Jim Woodey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Timothy Fields, Jr., Tetra Tech EM, Inc.

The final panel discussed ways the federal government can partner with contractors to improve the protection of site responders in future national disasters and how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and a contractor have made changes in their organizations based on the lessons learned from their responses to 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.

The topics for this year's Breakout Sessions were as follows:

Next Steps on the ESAP, Worker Safety and Health Annex, and Mission Assignment.

This breakout session provided a forum for discussing ways to enhance the NIEHS WETP Emergency Support Activation Plan (ESAP) and its general strategy for responding to disasters.

Awareness Level Training for the 15 Planning Scenarios

This breakout session reviewed the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) 15 planning scenarios and discussed ways in which to develop awareness level training for them.

Disaster Site Worker Course Modification to Address All-Hazards

The Disaster Site Work Course breakout session sought to identify strategies to modify current NIEHS WETP Disaster Site Worker course into a modularized all-hazards format.

Discussion of Just-In-Time, Preparedness and Pre-Deployment Training

This breakout session discussed the various types of training workers would need in order to participate in a disaster response and the appropriate use for just-in-time, preparedness, and pre-deployment training.

Presentations from the workshop, as well as the meeting agenda and participants list may be found at www.wetp.org

CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

NIEHS WETP has an opportunity to determine where it wants to be positioned in terms of its engagement during a national response. The workshop allowed all of the Program's constituents to reflect on where the program has been and provided an opportunity to begin discussions on what the program's focus should be now and looking forward toward the next ten years.

The nature of the program (government cooperative agreements with non-profit organizations), presents some challenges to its involvement in disaster response in that NIEHS WETP cannot require the awardees to participate in a response. Before committing to a response, NIEHS WETP must first touch base with awardees and ensure some are interested and able to participate. Awardees need to determine their organizational mechanisms for timely participation and response.

Issues identified from the Panel and Breakout Sessions:

Panel sessions on Thursday extended beyond the scheduled time. The result was that the Breakout sessions were limited to one hour on Friday and thus were somewhat limited.

1. Next Steps on the Emergency Support Activation Plan (ESAP), Worker Safety and Health Annex and Mission Assignments

- There is much NIEHS WETP and its awardees can and should be doing in terms of preparedness that would help facilitate a quicker and more successful deployment in future disasters. For instance, to the extent possible, NIEHS WETP and its awardees should be developing relationships with federal, state and local organizations that would be involved in a response in regions they cover. It is important to network with contractors and other response agencies that we provide safety training to, prior to an incident occurring.
- The idea of having a registry of trained workers (or trainers?) that can be tracked and called upon when a disaster occurs has been discussed within NIEHS WETP for some time. That need was raised again during the workshop. In a perfect world, these workers (trainers) would also have NIEHS WETP credentials, including an ID card, contracts and the like so that when an incident occurs, they are ready to be sent out and integrated into the Joint Field Office.
- Need to change perspective to incorporate preparedness perspective.
- New waves of workers need same training- demand for just in time training is big and our ESAP should incorporate these needs.
- Have an NIEHS WETP rapid response effort that consists of having awardees send out trainers representing NIEHS WETP for emergency response event.
- Need to have a reporting office within the regions.
- Need to quantify our training audiences prior to giving training.
- Clearinghouse was very useful in coordinating training efforts. The lesson learned was that Clearinghouse activities in the field need to be initiated during the early stage in order to maximize effectiveness.
- Need to have better credentialing: training personnel need to have ID cards to get into the JFO center.
- Need to establish how the RAD workforce is activated in our ESAP response.
- Increase coordination with DOE to utilize resources.
- Avian and Pandemic Flu: Developing basic groundwork for agriculture workers and healthcare workers - are on track with preparing for disaster.
- NIEHS WETP needed to be more direct in its supplemental funding application call. Establish a more generic format for completing supplemental funding application.

2. Awareness Level Training for the 15 DHS Scenarios

- Many people thought that there were similarities in the hazards presented by a number of the scenarios, and that these could probably be combined. For example, the scenarios involving chemical agents could be covered in one document, as could those scenarios covering biological hazards.
- Another approach offered was to determine the common or core hazards across all of the disaster scenarios, use these for all of the scenarios and then add supplemental guides that are specific to each scenario.
- There is a need to look at scenarios that are not included in DHS's 15 scenarios and develop guides for them as well, for example, tornadoes and earthquakes.
- The hazards are the same regardless of whether they are encountered in a disaster or common work environment; however there was recognition that the disaster adds a level of complexity to addressing and working with the hazards.

3. Disaster Site Worker Course Modifications to Address All-hazards

Several suggestions came out of this breakout session.

- There must be a site-specific plan that addresses both health and safety for skilled support personnel.
- Increase awareness of medical monitoring, importance of respirator use, and explain medical issues.
- Future health and safety emergency plans may include medical screening and exposure assessment.
- Identify site control issues – boundaries and access to the disaster site must be controlled.
- Workers will need to have a general sense of the relationship between the course and the 15 scenarios. This should be incorporated into group exercises.

4. Discussion of Just-in-time, Preparedness and Pre-deployment Training

- Discussed possible approaches and strategies for implementation.
- Pre-deployment training is useful because the expertise is there prior to an event. Need to focus more on using pre-deployment training.
- Pre-deployment training is critical and all trainers need to have this training. Is the mechanism for delivering specific training.
- Challenges to just-in-time and pre-deployment training were identified:
- Working with non-English speaking or indigenous persons.
- Therefore need to incorporate experts that work with these populations from other fields as well as develop and incorporate technology to assist trainers in the field.
- Using other resources – collaborate with other organizations so that trainers and workers are better prepared.
- During pre-deployment training, train individuals in areas that were lacking in the past and administer training for emerging issues (avian influenza, dirty bombs).

Other Issues

A variety of other issues were raised or became apparent during the workshop.

- The NIEHS WETP ESAP needs to be periodically reviewed and updated. There are still segments within the ESAP that have not been adequately developed. For instance, Item 4 in the Worker Safety and Health Training Support Annex is providing technical assistance such as respirator fit testing and distribution of PPE. To date, NIEHS WETP has not defined criteria to determine in which situations they will engage in this activity, nor have they detailed the steps necessary in order to perform the fit testing and PPE distribution. These things still must be done.
- Those involved in the NIEHS WETP still have a desire to do what we can to respond, particularly when no one else does (where we see a need for training), regardless of the challenges involved.

In many ways, the workshop confirmed that both NIEHS WETP and its awardees are more or less in sync in terms of feeling a responsibility and commitment to participate in the emergency response process at the national level.

C O N C L U S I O N

NIEHS WETP and its awardees recognize that the only way for the program to continue to thrive is for it to evolve as the world around it changes. The program reaffirmed its commitment to participate in national disaster response activities to ensure that workers get the training needed to protect them during these critical incidents. NIEHS WETP recognizes the valuable contribution made by all of its partners in these efforts and will continue to work with its federal agency partners to coordinate efforts. Over the course of this fiscal year, NIEHS WETP will be continuing efforts to build on the existing hazardous waste and emergency response training in the following ways:

- NIEHS WETP provided supplemental awards to four organizations to develop mostly awareness level materials to address the risks for workers associated with avian and pandemic influenza. The supplemental funding is being used to build on existing hazardous waste and emergency response (HAZWOPER) training by developing and presenting Pandemic/Avian Flu Awareness Programs, which are targeted both at workers in high risk populations as well as instructor/trainers who provide responder safety and health education. Other NIEHS consortium partners will deliver quality training to the health care sector, emergency responders and poultry workers who will be on the front line if a pandemic flu develops in the United States.
- The NIEHS WETP National Clearinghouse for Worker Safety and Health Training is developing an awareness level briefing and companion booklet for workers who may come into contact with contaminated material as a result of avian and/or pandemic influenza. The Clearinghouse is working with a group of interested government and private sector personnel, as well as awardees.
- NIEHS WETP, the Clearinghouse, and a working group of interested awardees and other government agency personnel will begin work on integrating information on the new DOE health and safety rule (851) into its training programs and the Clearinghouse will develop a fact sheet and an awareness level briefing on the rule, to be provided to DOE worker-trainers.
- NIEHS WETP, the Clearinghouse and a working group of interested awardees and other government agency personnel will begin work on developing awareness level materials for skilled support personnel in responding to/cleaning up after a dirty bomb is detonated, addressing the DHS planning scenario on RDD.
- NIEHS WETP is continuing its involvement in two NRP subcommittees: Training and Worker Safety and Health. It also continues its involvement in the Worker Safety and Health Annex Coordinating Committee and the Interagency Chemical Terrorism Workgroup.
- Other issues discussed at the workshop will be addressed during the year as time permits.